

House
REPUBLICAN
Conference

FloorPrep

Legislative Digest

Tuesday, November 16, 1999

J.C. Watts, Jr.
Chairman
4th District, Oklahoma

*House Meets at 11:00 a.m. for Morning Hour and
12:00 p.m. for Legislative Business*

Anticipated Floor Action:

H.R. 3257—State Flexibility Clarification Act

**H.R. 2862—Releasing Reversionary Interests in Certain Property in
Washington County, Utah**

H.R. 2863—Clarifying Liability for a Red Cliffs Desert Reserve Land Acquisition

**H.R. 2541—Adjusting the Boundaries of the Gulf Islands National Seashore to
Include Cat Island, Mississippi**

H.R. 3063—Trona Market Competition Act

H.R. 2818—Prohibiting Drilling in Mosquito Creek Lake

**H.Con.Res. 222—Condemning Armenian Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsian's
Assassination**

**H.Con.Res. 165—Sense of Congress Regarding U.S. Policy Toward the
Slovak Republic**

**H.Con.Res. 206—Expressing Congress's Concern Over the Conflict in
Chechnya**

**H.Con.Res. 211—Expressing Congress's Support for the Recent Elections in
the Republic of India**

H.Res. 169—Sense of the House Regarding Laos

**H.Res. 325—Recognizing the Importance of Increased Support and Funding
to Combat Diabetes**

H.Res. 370—Recognizing and Honoring Walter Payton

H.R. 2116—Veterans Millenium Health Care Act (Conference Report)

H.R. 2336—United States Marshals Service Improvement Act

**H.Res. 375—Providing Expedited Procedures for Certain Resolutions from
the Rules Committee**

H.Res. 374—Providing for Consideration of Motions to Suspend the Rules



Bills Considered Under Suspension of the Rules

Floor Situation: The House will consider the following 14 bills under suspension of the rules as its first order of business today. Each is debatable for 40 minutes, may not be amended, and requires a two-thirds majority vote for passage.

H.R. 3257—State Flexibility Clarification Act amends the 1974 Congressional Budget Act (*P.L. 93-344*) to (1) clarify that legislation proposing a new restriction on entitlement programs or a reduction in spending for these programs is a mandate (defined as a provision within legislation that imposes enforceable duties upon state or local governments or the private sector) unless there is new and sufficient flexibility to implement the restriction or funding reduction; (2) require committees to include in their reports on legislation to reduce federal funding for state entitlement programs an explanation of how the committee intends states to implement the reduction in funding and what flexibility, if any, is provided; and (3) require the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to mention in its mandates statements how states may implement the reductions under existing law. If such legislation does provide additional flexibility, then CBO must include in its report an estimate of whether the savings from such flexibility will offset the reduction in federal spending. A CBO cost estimate was unavailable at press time. The bill was introduced by Mr. Reynolds *et al.* and was not considered by a House committee.

H.R. 2862—Releasing Reversionary Interests in Certain Property in Washington County, Utah eliminates U.S. reversionary interests in property located in Washington County, Utah, so that the land may be transferred to the state of Utah. The land will be used for habitat conservation and a desert tortoise wildlife habitat area. A CBO cost estimate was unavailable at press time. The bill was introduced by Mr. Hansen and was not considered by a House committee.

H.R. 2863—Clarifying Liability for a Red Cliffs Desert Reserve Land Acquisition clarifies that the city of St. George, Utah, will remain liable for 15 acres of land located within the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve in Washington County, which is about to be transferred to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for a desert tortoise conservation project. The land was once used as a landfill and the BLM does not wish to assume liability for the area. A CBO cost estimate was unavailable at press time. The bill was introduced by Mr. Hansen and was not considered by a House committee.

H.R. 2541 modifies the boundaries of the Gulf Islands National Seashore to include approximately 2,000 acres of land and water known as Cat Island in Mississippi. In addition, the bill authorizes the Interior Secretary to acquire the property from willing sellers and authorizes the appropriation of necessary amounts for this acquisition. CBO estimates that enactment will cost as much as \$30 million for purchasing the island, assuming appropriations of the necessary amounts, as well as between \$1 million and \$2 million over the next five years to build visitor facilities. Operating costs for the new property will amount to approximately \$500,000 in FY 2000 and about \$200,000 annually thereafter. The bill was introduced by Mr. Taylor (MS) and was reported by the Resources Committee by voice vote on October 27.

H.R. 3063—Trona Market Competition Act amends the 1920 Mineral Leasing Act to allow the Interior Secretary to double the number of federal leases that may be held by individual sodium producers in a single state from 15,360 acres to 30,720 acres. CBO estimates that enactment will not affect federal spending. The bill was introduced by Mrs. Cubin and was reported by the Resources Committee by voice vote on October 27.

H.R. 2818—Prohibiting Drilling in Mosquito Creek Lake prohibits oil and gas drilling in the Mosquito Creek Lake in Cortland, Ohio, and allows the U.S. Attorney General to enforce the prohibition through U.S. district courts. A CBO cost estimate was unavailable at press time. The bill was introduced by Mr. Traficant and was reported by the Resources Committee by voice vote on October 27.

H.Con.Res. 222 expresses the sense of Congress (1) condemning the slaying of the prime minister of Armenia, Vazgen Sargsian, and other members of the Armenian government struck down in a violent attack by gunmen on October 27; (2) that the perpetrators of these vile acts be swiftly brought to justice so that Armenia may demonstrate its opposition to acts of terror; (3) commending the efforts of the late prime minister and the Armenian government for their commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and for supporting free market movements internationally; and (4) that the U.S. should cherish its strong friendship with Armenia. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Rogan and was reported by the International Relations Committee by voice vote on November 9.

H.Con.Res. 165 expresses the sense of Congress commending the government of the Slovak Republic for (1) addressing the issue of proper treatment of its citizens regardless of ethnic background, particularly ethnic Hungarians; (2) improving the economic situation in the country; (3) accelerating the privatization of state-owned enterprises in a fair and open process; and (4) supporting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the recent conflict in Kosovo. The resolution also urges the government of the Slovak Republic to continue to implement programs that may qualify the nation for entrance into the European Union and NATO and commends the country for its continued support of the NATO effort to ensure stability and democratization across Europe. Finally, the resolution encourages the United States to support efforts to eventually integrate the Slovak Republic into pan-European and trans-Atlantic institutions. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Mica *et al.* and was reported by the International Relations Committee by voice vote on November 9.

H.Con.Res. 206 expresses Congress's grave concern over the armed conflict in the Northern Caucasus region of the Russian Federation, which has inflicted hundreds of civilian casualties and displaced thousands of people. In addition, the resolution (1) urges the Russian Federation to cease using force against Chechnya's civilians, in accordance with commitments of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); (2) urges the Russian Federation to negotiate with Northern Caucasus representatives, including President Maskhadov and his government, to assist with the conflict prevention and crisis management capabilities of the OSCE, which helped end the 1994-1996 Russo-Chechen War; (3) urges Chechnya's government to use every appropriate means to deny extremist forces located in its territory a base of operations for mounting armed incursions that threaten the peace and stability in the Northern Caucasus region; (4) cautions that forcible resettlement of internally displaced persons would evoke outrage from the international community; (5) urges the Russian Federation to seek and accept international humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of the internally displaced persons from Chechnya, so as to reduce the risk of civilian casualties; and (6) calls on the U.S. government to express to all parties the necessity of resolving the conflict peacefully, with full respect to the human rights of all Russian Federation citizens, and to support providing appropriate international humanitarian assistance. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Smith (NJ) and was reported by the International Relations Committee by voice vote on November 9.

H.Con.Res. 211 congratulates the people of the Republic of India for successful national elections and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his re-election. The resolution also calls on President Clinton to travel to India as part of any South Asia trip and urges him to broaden the special relationship between

U.S. and India into a strategic partnership. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Ackerman *et al.* and was reported by the International Relations Committee by voice vote on November 9.

H.Res. 169 expresses the sense of the House that the government of Laos should (1) respect international norms of human rights and democratic freedoms for the Laotian people, and fully honor its commitments to those norms and freedoms as embodied in its constitution and international agreements as well as the 1962 Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos and the 1973 Vientiane Agreement on Laos; (2) issue a public statement specifically reaffirming its commitment to protecting religious freedom and other basic human rights; (3) institute a process of democracy, human rights, and openly contested free and fair elections in Laos, and ensure specifically that the national assembly elections—currently scheduled for 2002—are openly contested; and (4) allow access for international human rights monitors, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and Amnesty International, to Laotian prisons, and to all regions of the country to investigate allegations of human rights abuses, including those against the Hmong people, when requested. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Vento and Mr. Smith (NJ) and was reported by the International Relations Committee by voice vote on November 9.

H.Res. 325 expresses the sense of Congress that the federal government has a responsibility to (1) continue to increase research funding, as recommended by the Diabetes Research Working Group, to help discover the causes, treatments, and a cure for diabetes; (2) raise awareness about the importance of the early detection and proper treatment of diabetes; and (3) continue to consider ways to improve access to, and the quality of, health care services for diagnosing and treating diabetes. In addition, the resolution expresses that all Americans should take an active role in fighting diabetes by watching for the early symptoms of diabetes. Finally, the resolution states that national and community organizations and health care providers should promote awareness of diabetes and its complications and encourage early detection through regular screenings, education, and by providing information, support, and access to services. The resolution was introduced by Mr. LaFalce *et al.* and was not considered by a House committee.

H.Res. 370 recognizes and honors Walter Payton as one of the great professional football players of all time and for his many contributions to Mississippi and the country as a role model and father. The resolution extends its deepest condolences to his wife and family. Born on July 25, 1954, in Columbia, Mississippi, Payton died on November 1 of cancer that was discovered during treatment for a rare liver disease. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Pickering *et al.* and was not considered by a House committee.

H.R. 2116—Veterans Millennium Health Care Act (Conference Report) makes comprehensive reforms to improve access to, as well as the timeliness and quality of, the Veterans Administration (VA) health care system. Reforms to improve veterans' access to care include (1) requiring the VA to increase home and community-based options for veterans needing extended care; (2) requiring the VA to provide nursing home care to certain veterans through 2003; (3) establishing means to enhance revenues for the VA (e.g., the bill establishes a copayment for certain services and establishes a Treasury fund for the deposit of such receipts); (4) lifting the six-month limit on VA adult day health care; (5) authorizing the VA to enhance mental health care services; and (6) establishing a pilot program to make contract arrangements for assisted living services.

The bill also makes several changes to VA medical program administration, including (1) authorizing the VA to increase the \$2 drug copayment amount, establishing a maximum annual and monthly payment for veterans with multiple outpatient prescriptions, and revising copayments on outpatient care for higher income veterans; (2) revising the priority system for awarding grants under the state home construction program; and (3) expanding the VA's authority to lease unneeded property. In addition, the measure:

- * authorizes \$57.5 million for FYs 2000-2001 for construction and \$2.2 million for leasing VA medical facilities;
- * authorizes dependency and indemnity compensation payments to surviving spouses of certain former prisoners of war;
- * restores eligibility for CHAMPVA medical care, education, and housing loans for surviving spouses who lost eligibility due to remarriage;
- * extends the VA's authority to assist homeless veterans and authorizes \$65 million for FYs 2000-2003 for the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program; and
- * modifies the retirement and survivor annuity programs for U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims judges.

The House passed H.R. 2116 under suspension of the rules on September 21 by a vote of 369-46. For information on H.R. 2116 as it was debated in the House, see *Legislative Digest* Vol. XXVIII, #26, September 17, 1999.

Additional Information: See *Legislative Digest*, Vol. XXVIII, #34, November 12, 1999.



Vote on Measure Considered Under Suspension of the Rules

Floor Situation: The House will vote on the following measure, which was considered under suspension of the rules on November 10 but for which a recorded vote was postponed, after it finishes considering the scheduled suspensions.

- * **H.R. 2336—United States Marshals Service Improvement Act** amends U.S. Code to change the selection process for United States Marshals. Currently, the president appoints U.S. Marshals by with the advice and consent of the Senate. The measure empowers the Attorney General, instead of the president, to appoint U.S. Marshals. They will be selected on a competitive basis from among the career managers within the Marshals Service and other federal law enforcement agencies. Incumbent U.S. Marshals, selected before enactment of the measure, will continue to perform the duties of their office until their terms expire and successors are appointed. Marshals selected between enactment and December 31, 2001, will still be appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate. They will serve a four-year term, unless they resign or are removed by the president. The committee asserts that currently there are no criteria for selecting U.S. Marshals and that, consequently, unqualified individuals are being hired. Furthermore, the committee notes, the Marshals Service is not held accountable for fiscal irresponsibility. CBO estimates that enactment will have no significant impact on the federal budget. The bill was introduced by Mr. McCollum and was reported by the Judiciary Committee by voice vote on July 20, 1999.



H.Res. 375—Providing Expedited Procedures for Certain Resolutions from the Rules Committee

Floor Situation: The House will consider H.Res. 375 after it finishes voting on suspensions. It is a privileged resolution, subject to one hour of debate. It may not be amended and no motion to recommit is allowed.

Summary: The resolution waives House rules requiring a two-thirds vote to consider a rule on the same day it is reported for general or continuing appropriations bills for FY 2000. This waiver applies to any such rules reported on or before November 17.



H.Res. 374—Providing for Consideration of Motions to Suspend the Rules

Floor Situation: The House will consider H.Res. 374 after it finishes considering H.Res. 375. It is a privileged resolution, subject to one hour of debate. It may not be amended and no motion to recommit is allowed.

Summary: The resolution allows the House to consider motions to suspend the rules on any day through November 17; the motion must be announced at least one hour before being offered and the Speaker or his designee must consult with the minority leader or his designee. Traditionally under House rules, suspensions are considered only on Monday or Tuesday.



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